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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000868

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: FATAH MAYOR IN GAZA QUILTS UNDER PRESSURE FROM HAMAS

REF: A. JERUSALEM 340
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 179

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Greg Marchese, for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Mayor of Gaza's al-Qarrara Municipality, a Fatah member, is resigning from his post June 1, having come under pressure from Hamas on the distribution of foreign assistance. His deputy (a Hamas member) will take over as mayor. Commenting on Gaza's political scene, the Mayor said that Hamas fears it is losing popularity due to deteriorating living conditions and is unlikely to seek new elections. He and other Gaza-based contacts believe that conditions in Gaza are eroding support for Hamas, but note that the Gaza-based "government" continues to pressure municipalities to funnel assistance to Hamas affiliates. End Summary.

MAYOR'S RESIGNATION MEANS ANOTHER
GAZA MUNICIPALITY HAS A HAMAS MAYOR

[1](#)2. (C) The Mayor of al-Qarrara, Eid Sulayman Abadlah, told PolOff May 27 that he is resigning from his post June 1. (Note: Abadlah was elected to the al-Qarrara city council -- a community in the central Gaza Strip -- on a Fatah slate. The city council consists of seven Fatah members and six Hamas members. End note.) Abadlah said his resignation will leave equal numbers of Fatah and Hamas delegates on the city council, and that the deputy mayor, Hamas member Abdul Rahman Abadlah, will become mayor.

[1](#)3. (C) Abadlah said municipal elections are scheduled throughout the Palestinian territories in 2010, but he did not expect Hamas to hold elections in Gaza. Hamas fears that its popularity has decreased due to deteriorating living conditions, he said. Abadlah doubted Fatah would earn many votes in new elections, as it has not improved its image or disciplined its ranks since the last elections. He said residents of al-Qarrara are more concerned with daily survival than with political affiliation.

RESIGNATION A RESULT OF PRESSURE TO
FAVOR HAMAS IN ASSISTANCE DISTRIBUTION

[1](#)4. (C) Abadlah claims his health requires treatment in Jordan, and he cannot effectively serve the community during extended periods abroad. However, he also admitted that he is resigning because Hamas city council members have pressured him to direct humanitarian aid to Hamas supporters, rather than distribute aid based on need. Abadlah said the Gaza-based "Ministry" of Local Governance had not pressured him to resign, but that the Hamas city council members had the "ministry's" support.

HAMAS "MINISTRY" SEEKING GREATER CONTROL

[1](#)5. (C) Bassam Nasser, an NGO grants management Officer inQaza, told PolOff May 27 that al-Qarrara is the most recent Gaza municipality to come under Hamas control. Nasser (please protect) said Hamas replaced mayors in Gaza's large municipalities in 2007, but left small municipalities -- like al-Qarrara, Abasin al-Jadid, Abasin al-Kabir, and al-Fukhari -- alone. He said Hamas feared a PA crackdown on Hamas mayors in the West Bank, and therefore did not believe the political cost of taking over the small communities was worth the risk at the time. Nasser confirmed Abadlah's statement that the al-Qarrara city council -- not the "ministry" -- pressured him to resign because he refused to funnel aid to Hamas members. However, because a Hamas mayor is taking over the municipality, the "ministry" is unlikely to request that Abadlah stay in place, he said. (Note: One consequence of the resignation is a sharp decline in foreign assistance to the municipality due to legal restrictions on working with Hamas. End Note.)

MODERATE MAYORS UNDER PRESSURE TO ASSIST HAMAS

[1](#)6. (C) Nasser said that Gazans believe Hamas is "as corrupt as the PA," and they are "tiring" of the Hamas government. He said that Abadlah's resignation, and the subsequent loss of international assistance to al-Qarrara, will increase

anger and depression among the locals. Nasser said that his organization is cutting projects in al-Qarrara. He said that mayors in al-Fukhari and the Abasin communities so far have resisted pressure to direct aid to Hamas affiliates because

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the city councils are moderate, but that all Gaza's municipalities are under pressure to cater to Hamas. He said the number of municipalities in Gaza with which the international community can work is decreasing, even though the need for aid in all Gaza's communities remains high.
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